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Message Text

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53
ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 PM-07 NSC-07 SP-03 SS-20 RSC-01

L-03 MC-02 EB-11 COME-00 OMB-01 TRSE-00 CIAE-00

INR-11 NSAE-00 DRC-01 /093 W
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P R 161743Z AUG 74
FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
TO SECSTATE WASHDCRIORITY 1782
INFO AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 6219

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, BEXP, BE
SUBJECT: F-104 REPLACEMENT AND PURCHASE OF LANCE MISSILE

1. AT INFORMAL LUNCHEON CONVERSATION EMBASSY HAD WITH JEAN BOLAND, WHO HEADS OFFICE OF INDUSTRIAL COMPENSATION STAFF HANDLING OFFSET IN BELGIAN MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS, HE MADE THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPAL OBSERVATIONS ON F-104 REPLACEMENT ISSUE.

A. BOLAND STATED IN HIS VIEW ECONOMIC COMPENSATION AND NOT RELATIVE MILITARY MERITS OF COMPETING PLANES, WOULD BE THE KEY FACTOR IN BELGIAN DECISION PLANE REPLACEMENT ISSUE. HE SAID THAT WHILE DECISION WILL BE TAKEN ON BOTH POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC GROUNDS, POLITICAIANS WILL USE ECONOMIC ARGUMENTS TO SERVE THEIR POLITICAL INTERESTS. IF THE U.S. OFFSET OFFER WERE SIGNIFICANTLY BETTER THAN THE FRENCH, BOLAND THOUGHT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO REJECT.

B. BOLAND THOUGHT THAT THE BELGIAN DECISION WOULD NOT BE IN SEPTEMBER BUT WOULD BE DELAYED UNTIL THE END OF THE YEAR. HE BASED HIS VIEW ON DIFFICULT CURRENT DOMESTIC ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE IN BELGIUM, (INFLATION
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AND TIGHT BUDGET), WHICH BE THOUGHT, WOULD INHIBIT ANNOUNCEMENT OF A

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LARGE MILITARY PURCHASE IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE. HE
AGREED THAT A DELAY IN THE BELGIAN DECISION WOULD HELP
U.S. CHANCES.

C. BOLAND EMPHASIZED HIS VIEW THAT MINISTEROF
DEFENSE VANDEN BOEYNANTS WAS NOT IRREVOCABLY COMMITTED
TO THE PURCHASE OF THE MIRAGE SUPER F-1/M-53, AS WAS
GENERALLY BELIEVED.
HE THOUGHT NATURE OF U.S. OFFER
COULD STILL INFLUENCE VANDEN BOEYNANTS, VIEWS.

D. BOLAND APPEARED CONVINCED THAT FUTURE OF EUROPEAN
AEROSPACE INDUSTRY CONTINGENT UPON EUROPEAN COUNTRY
OBTAINING CONTRACTS FOR F-104 REPLACEMENT AND SAID THAT
FRENCH PUSHING THIS AGRUMENT HARD TO THEIR APPARENT
ADVANTAGE. WHILE BOLAND IS NOT IN DECISIVE POSITION IN
DECISION MAKING PROCESS, HIS VIEW ON THIS POINT PROBABLY
REFLECTS WIDESPREAD BELGIAN THINKING WHICH HE SHARES.
DESPITE THIS CONSIDERATION, WHICH BOLAND RELATED TO
EMPLOYMENT POSSIBILITIES IN BELGIUM, BOLAND WAS NOT
HOSTILE TO U.S. OBTAINING F-104 REPLACEMENT CONTRACT IF
OFFSET OFFER WERE IMPROVED.

2. COMMENT: WHILE BOLAND NOT MINISTRY OF ECONOMICS
REPRESENTATIVE ON INTERMINISTERIAL COUNCIL WHICH WILL
MAKE FINAL DECISION ON F-104 REPLACEMENT, HE IS A KEY
FIGURE IN EVALUATING THE VARIOUS OFFSET OFFERS. ALTHOUGH
A GOOD FRIEND OF THE U.S. HE IS A HARD-HEADED BELGIAN
FIRST. WE ARE INCLINED TO GIVE WEIGHT TO HIS VIEWS.
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